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TOYS THAT TEACH

A radio talk by Mrs. Lydia Ann Lynde, Child Health and Training, East Lansing, Michigan, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, December 10, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 47 associate NBC radio stations.

Friends: It is joy month again and parents in our extension Child Study groups are pledging "a happy Christmas for the children." No other part of our Christmas planning gives us as much thrill and delight as does our planning, making and buying for our children. Father with his tools and mother with her needle are happy with the joy of creating - spurred on by the visions of their children's delight. The toy stores are thronged with eager adults seeking the jolliest things for Billy, Mary and Susan.

We all love toy stores. We are amazed and a little confused, too, by the almost endless display. As we wander down the aisles we look to see what others are selecting and smile to hear them make the same comments that are ringing in our own hearts and minds - "Oh, how cute" - "How I would have loved that." We are living over some of the joys of our childhood and remembering some of the hunger and longings. We hear a young father say, "I always wanted an electric train," as he buys one for his three-year old Bobby. Will he be disappointed on Christmas morning when Bobby fails to show the joy and excitement his father anticipates? What's the matter with a boy who will leave an electric train to play with a toy telephone or a mere dump truck? Or the little girl who carries some of the astonishingly beautiful furniture from the complete and perfect doll house to make her own doll house in a box or a corner? Because we so love that completeness it is hard to understand how unstimulating or overstimulating it may be to the child.

Friends, through his play your child grows and develops. How rapid and sound this development will be depends upon the kind of play and the kind of play depends upon the things with which he plays. If his play is bringing him growth and development he is happy and contented. If it does not meet this need he is dissatisfied, restless and irritable.

In our Michigan kit of home-made toys we have planned to meet these changing needs. To help the baby learn to use his eyes and muscles together we have the disappearing object can - a coffee can with a slit in the lid through which he slips disks of wood or milk bottle tops. We have nested tin cans, spools for stringing, and bean bags scantily filled that little hands may grasp them easily. Five hundred eleven sets of these toys were made during the past year by parents in our extension child study groups.

Two hundred ninety-two others have made trains. The engine, made by fastening on to a bit of board a long narrow can for the boiler and a block of wood for the cab, pulls behind it a train of cigar-box cars, hooked together with right angle hooks and screw eyes. They report that the three and four-year-olds prefer these trains above all others. Nearly two hundred

fathers have had fun making blocks - big blocks that their children can use in building useable doll houses, garages and stores and they have made doll furniture - using clothes pins for legs.

For the little children a hundred simple dolls and stuffed animal toys were made, and the two-year olds loved a square of bright cloth to wrap about these cuddly toys. The eight-year old girls have been happy over the sewing kits their parents made them, father making the box and mother equipping it with scissors, needles, thread, thimble and squares of choice cloth.

Many rural school children have enjoyed the cigar-box looms. Both boys and girls like to weave and self-made rugs for the doll house and purses for their pennies are highly treasured.

Seventy-six families have reported a toy making project. In each home a work shop has been set up in a spare room or basement and the entire family works together at this happy creating. All the little cousins will be made happy and every little neighbor, too.

In three hundred nine homes picture books have been made. For the toddler these have been two pages of tough cardboard fastened together with cloth, one picture on a page; a single animal, a house, a car, a tree or bird. And for the older child pages of tough wrapping paper with pictures so mounted as to leave room for their own stories to be written.

Michigan parents are learning to appreciate the growth that comes through play. They are learning to avoid the "too complete"; the gaudy and the one-performance mechanical toy, and buying or making simple toys with many possible uses, toys that encourage manipulation, construction, and experimentation; toys that stimulate imagination or dramatic, and group play.

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